

Southcentral Deanery Reports / June 2023

St. Anthony Orthodox Mission
San Antonio, TX
Fr. David Wooten

St. Anthony's continues to see a steady influx of inquirers and catechumens. We have reestablished some contact with many Ukrainian parishioners that have long been absent (since the initial conflict with Russia in 2014!) and hope to see them much more regularly now. We have begun to move decisively in a direction for raising funds for a parish hall. This will likely take us a good few years, but it is good to have a direction in which to head. Two new readers were tonsured for the parish at His Grace Gerasim's visit at Annunciation, and a new round of catechism classes will begin during Holy Spirit Week. The choir -- both directors and singers -- continues to work hard to grow and develop after a significant lull during the pandemic years.

Challenges are a surprising number of faithful who are, for one reason or another, discouraged and attending much less frequently these days and are largely non-communicative while absent. Working to reestablish contact and determine reasons for absence. This has also affected their children's attendance at church school (and, in some cases, the teacher's attendance!), and so Fr. David and Mka. Natalia will spend time this summer considering alterations to the approach to Christian Ed for the parish's children.

St. Basil the Great Mission
Weatherford, OK
Fr. Nick Aiello

Our mission, like so many in our deanery and diocese, has experienced great growth since the end of the pandemic. And, Thank God, it continues.

We received 17 people into the Church last year from a low during COVID of just 6 people (including my wife and myself). By the end of this calendar year I expect our membership (through more converts entering the Church and a few families commuting or relocating to join us), to close to 45 members.

Financially the timing is perfect as well. We currently owe about \$70K on our building and property (our total debt) and will then begin saving to build a permanent church building on our property and convert our existing space to a fellowship hall.

This coming year I hope to add a deacon to our mission as he is finishing the Late Vocation Program very soon. And we have a tonsured Reader and his family joining us in August to help me with the daily matins, vespers and biweekly vigils and Divine Liturgy we serve (he works from home with flexible hours and has moved here for this express purpose). Our plan is also for him to train the other members who have been helping us read and create a Readers schedule.

Having now two new members with significant choral experience we hope to also add a choir this year for the first time.

And I will continue this year to head the local Christmas ministry for the underprivileged for our local ministerial alliance. It is the largest and oldest ministry in Weatherford and has been a great platform towards normalizing and acclimating our local community to the Orthodox Church.

St. John of Damascus Mission

Tyler, TX

Fr. David Bozeman

St. John of Damascus Mission continues to be a vibrant community experiencing interest in growth in many areas. We have had an influx of new families and individuals over the last year, all converts for the most part, from heterodox traditions. With so many new folks we have concentrated heavily on catechism as well as education for both our children and adults. Our average attendance at Divine Liturgy on Sundays in 2022 was 125 persons. That has increased in 2023 to an average Sunday attendance of 145 persons. Our highest attendance was at Pascha this year with 198 persons in attendance. The house is pretty full, so to speak.

Here is the metrical data for 2022 and 2023 YTD:

- Baptisms / chrismations 2022 - **14** (Baptisms) **11** (Chrismations)
- Baptisms / chrismations 2023 YTD - **7** (Baptisms) **9** (Chrismations)
- Weddings in 2022 – **1**
- Weddings in 2023 YTD - **1**
- Funerals in 2022 – **3**
- Funerals in 2023 YTD – **1**

Our biggest project over the last year was the installation of our next phase of iconography from Ivan Rumyantsev. We installed large scale icons of the Nativity of Christ, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost in the transepts of the church and above the iconostasis. We anticipate beginning the fundraising for our next phase in the coming months.

The newly ordained priest, Fr. Athanasios Kombos has nearly completed a one-year internship at St. John's. While here he has re-started the St. Paisios Mission in Nacogdoches and will be serving there exclusively beginning in July. Our other mission, St. Ephraim in Longview, under the care of Fr. Herman Garrison has begun to hold weekly services in a temporary space. We anticipate their rapid development over the next year. This will certainly impact the St. John's community as we see quite a few folks depart for this mission work. We are confident however that God will continue to bring those in need to our missions and that our work will continue.

All Saints of North America Orthodox Church

Albuquerque, NM

Fr. Nikolai Miletkov

- We hope to begin services in our new Church later this year. Glory be to God!

- The purchase of the adjacent property continues to be a great blessing. We are already using the extra space for more convenient parking.
- The current average Sunday attendance is approximately 110.
- From start of 2022 we received 19 people in the Church, had 4 Weddings and 3 Funerals.
- Dn Silouan Parchert just finished his first year in the M.Div. program at St. Vladimir's Seminary. Please pray for him, Matushka Emilia (and unborn child), Colin, Brendan, and Sebastian.
- Isaack Eric Debelak has entered the DVP with the blessing of Archbishop Alexander.
- Our weekly schedule consists of Continuing Education/Book Study on Tuesday Morning; Wednesday Daily Vespers; Thursday morning Divine Liturgy, Saturday at 5pm Teen Book Study also Catechumen class followed by Great Vespers and Sunday Liturgy.
- Our ministries include Sunday School, Youth Group, Orthodox Young Adult Fellowship, Women's Group, Men's Group, and Couples Fellowship.
- Our Church still partners with local charitable organizations by providing financial donations, food, clothes, and hygiene items.
- The Sisterhood of St. Anna continues to organize fundraising events and facilitate charitable giving for local, national, and international causes.
- Our parish Clergy participate in the New Mexico Orthodox Clergy Fellowship Meetings, with our own Dn. Stephen Henne being the group's coordinator.

St. Seraphim Cathedral
Dallas, TX
Bp. Gerasim

Attendance, tithing, catechesis, and regularity of services have reached an all-time high.

At present four priests serve at the Cathedral: Archpriests John Anderson, Joseph Chaffee, Theophan Warren, and Oleg Kostenko. The latter two both have outside employment.

At present three deacons serve: Protodeacons Steven Kroll and Brendan Doss as well as Deacon Christopher Anderson. We expect to receive one more deacon to our parish staff from the Antiochian Archdiocese this summer. We regularly have a full complement of subdeacons, readers, and acolytes. We are working on more training for readers and acolytes.

Archpriest John teaches an Adult-education class on Tuesday on the spiritual life. Archpriest Joseph is working with those preparing for marriage and newlyweds. Archpriest Theophan oversees the catechetical program which is bearing much fruit. Archpriest Oleg teaches an Adult-education class once a month in Russian on the third Saturday. I teach an Adult-education class on Wednesday evening often being replaced by Seraphim Rohlin. Two parishioners are enrolled in Diaconal Formation classes. During the school year we had an active Church School on Sunday and a Wednesday morning homeschool coop.

Last summer we remodeled the Church School rooms on the second floor of the Parish Hall. We have made progress this year with drainage in front of the Parish Hall. We are working on repairing our entryway and remodeling our bookstore. The Diocesan offices also used by Cathedral clergy were repaired this last winter after a tree crashed through the roof during a storm. Lighting in the parking lot has been improved.

We presently face some repairs to the Cathedral roof to prevent leaks, parking lot improvement, and a continued remodel of the parish hall.

Our Parish Council at present is seriously reviewing parish administration and preparing to assess our secretarial needs.

**St. Maximus the Confessor Mission
Denton, TX
Fr. Justin Frederick**

By God's great mercy, we have nearly completed the twenty-second year from our founding in July, 2001 and enjoy healthy, vibrant parish life. In 2022, we received 13 adults and 7 children into the Church. This year to date, we have received 6 adults and 2 children, and conducted 1 wedding. More weddings, receptions, and infants are to come. We have had no deaths.

This year we are seeing all-time record attendance on Sunday morning, averaging 151 so far this year, up over 139 last year, and up over our highest previous year 2019 at 147. Last month, a non-Pascha month, we averaged 165. Vigil on Saturday evening this year averages 59, not quite to our high of 64 in 2019. The recitation of these numbers is not to boast but to highlight our greatest need: we cram these people into 800 square feet of nave, which should comfortably hold 90. Fortunately, many of our people are children, but we desperately need more room. We are on the fourth round of submitting our site plan to the city, but they have yet to approve it and each time append new comments. We have saved a lot of money (at least a quarter of the projected cost), but we need to raise more. We ask your prayers for us.

**St. Barbara Orthodox Church
Fort Worth, TX
Fr. Basil Zebrun**

A PRE-COVID FEEL:

The latter part of 2022 and the first half of 2023 saw a greater return to normalcy for St. Barbara's. Parishioners enthusiastically took part in various community activities. As examples:

PARISH EVENTS:

His Grace Gerasim, Bishop of Ft. Worth celebrated Liturgy with us on Sunday, October 9, 2022, the feast of St. Tikhon of North America, as well as on Sunday, May 14, 2023 commemorating the Samaritan Woman and Mothers' Day. His visits are always occasions of great joy for parishioners and friends. On these two occasions we gratefully welcomed servers and singers from the Cathedral, enhancing our celebration of the Liturgies.

During the Fall a four-month charity drive took place to collect, purchase, organize and deliver parish donations to the local Presbyterian Men's Night Shelter. The amount collected was surprising, even from the perspective of the shelter itself. Donated were: 50 sets of sheets, 96 packages of T-shirts, 357 pairs of socks, 420 pairs of underwear, and 10 bags of clean, gently used men's clothing. These needed items were suggested by employees at the shelter.

After a four-year hiatus, the parish's Annual Christmas Eve Holy Supper returned in December of 2022. Following the Nativity Eve service, dozens of people joined us for this beautiful tradition, reinforcing through prayers, decorations and symbolic foods, the understanding of Christ as the Light of the world.

In January we enjoyed the ever-popular Chili and Cornbread Competition, with awards for first, second and third place winners in each category. A great time was had by all. A wonderful way to warm-up in what is often the coldest month of the year.

In addition, once-a-month Saturday Church School classes were faithfully attended by enthusiastic students. Reference materials and take-home packets were provided each month for parents to continue religious education at home, reinforcing topics focused on during Church School.

Conducted were several readers workshops in the Fall of 2022. Changes, additions and improvements were made to the choir. Choir members continue to rehearse familiar pieces, with new music currently being added to the group's repertoire.

Summer singing and music theory classes have been started for women, young ladies and girls of the parish. Instructors are two experienced female music majors, trained vocalists and directors. We wish to focus on the men as well, in the near future. The hope is three-fold: to introduce more Church members to the basics of music (the youngest participant is currently 4 years of age), to encourage greater congregational participation in services, and to possibly discover new members for the choir.

Twice a month cleaning parties are conducted to sanitize and beautify the Church and hall. Sessions last anywhere from 3 to 5 hours. The aftereffects are quite noticeable, with the building looking and smelling fresh for days afterwards. A quicker more general cleaning is conducted by parishioners each Sunday after Liturgy.

People also clean and "decorate specific" for feasts and fasts of the Church. Members continue to be very generous with their time and contributions to guarantee that the building looks both festive and inviting for major seasonal celebrations and special events.

And last, but certainly not least, Coffee Hours have been exceptional this past year. Even with a two-team, potluck rotating schedule there continues to be more than enough food, as well as great variety. A number of people gladly pitch in for set-up and clean-up afterwards.

STATISTICS:

During this past year we received into the Church, 9 children and 9 adults. Catechumen and inquirer classes are conducted each Wednesday after Vespers. One wedding was celebrated (with another on the horizon), and one funeral.

A very recent funeral was celebrated at the Cathedral for a member of St. Seraphim's and a founding member of St. Barbara's. She and her husband actually provided the Ft. Worth Mission with its first home from 1979 to 1984, a side room of a dental lab, converted into a chapel. May her memory be eternal!

FINANCES and WEBSITE:

Expenses decreased from the previous year. Income increased. While most donations are received by check or cash, over 10% of contributions last year came from on-line donations. The website continues to be a valuable source of information and outreach, as well as a convenient tool for giving.

This past year we transitioned to a second webmaster, highly trained and qualified as was his predecessor. We were and are most grateful to them both.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

St. Barbara's looks forward to the months ahead: to various community activities, visits from Archbishop Alexander and/or Bishop Gerasim, and to the reception of catechumens into the fullness of the Faith.

St. George the Greatmartyr Mission

Pharr, TX

Fr. Silviu Bunta

In 2022 I only served the parish of St. George as a supply priest, sporadically, and only between May and December. During those months I still had my job back in Ohio and I was also substituting on a part-time basis at a Greek parish in southwest Ohio. Based on what I have learned of St. George in the meantime, the parish council and all the parishioners worked hard to keep the parish from closing, with regular reader's services and several non-liturgical functions. Also, Bp. Gerasim and Fr. David Wooten offered services on a regular basis.

Since January 8 of this year, when I was appointed priest-in-charge, we have had all the services which were offered before Fr. Antonio's death (God rest his soul!). I have also introduced, or I am introducing new services: Matins before morning Liturgies, vespereal Liturgies for all the great feasts (if they do not fall on weekend), Unction, the little Paraklisis, and the Ninth Hour before Vespers. In February we were able to restart the Sunday school for two age groups, 4-6 (non-readers) and 7-12 (readers). The school is now on its summer break and will restart in September. Also, every first Sunday of the month I have a "baffle the priest" open discussion with all teenagers and young adults of the parish, immediately after the Divine Liturgy, while the common meal is being prepared. They are generally nice to me, although there is always room for a Transylvanian to complain.

Every three weeks I also have catechesis classes with the catechumens of the parish—two whom I inherited from Fr. Antonio and five that I have received to the catechumenate myself. Yet, attendance in these classes is irregular. I have also baptized two babies and had one funeral for a former member of the parish who was brought back to the valley from Houston in order to be buried next to her husband. I am also offering office hours on a weekly basis (four hours each week) and we have been able, after a long hiatus, to put together our international food festival last "winter" (improperly put, for the valley).

The festival is our most important fundraising event; its income makes the difference between shutting down and surviving for another year. Of course, we will have it again this coming "winter." We have decluttered and deep-cleaned the church and the hall and cleared the grounds. We purchased all new liturgical vessels and objects from Romania, for all services (including for Unction, which is served twice a year).

I also draw much heart from the fact that confession is starting again, and we talk about prayer on a regular basis. Attendance has been between 40-85 at the Sunday Divine Liturgy. At Vespers on Wednesdays and Saturdays we can have between 4 and 15 people in church. Also, I have seen an increased involvement in work projects. If we can handle the projects ourselves, I encourage personal participation rather than payments to hire someone, in order to foster brotherhood.

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem Mission
The Woodlands, TX
Fr. Benedict Crawford**

St. Cyril Orthodox Mission was founded in November 2004, and celebrated its first Divine Liturgy in August 2005. The current priest was assigned in August 2016.

At present our total membership includes 86 adults and 29 children, along with 19 catechumens and inquirers. Our average Sunday attendance is about 100. We normally have Vespers on Saturdays, Divine Liturgy on Sundays, and another Divine Liturgy each week, along with special services for feasts, and a weekly inquirer class. Nearly every Sunday we have a number of new visitors, either Orthodox or interested in Orthodoxy.

We are currently meeting in two modular buildings on rented property. Our current temple can accommodate around 125 people, and some Sundays we now have 110 or more attending. Thus, we are trying to save money toward the purchase of a piece of property where we might either move our current buildings or enjoy a larger space.

**Holy Apostles Orthodox Church
Bixby, OK
Fr. Ambrose Arrington**

By God's mercy, we are drawing near to completing construction on our new parish hall. We have since 2008 used a donated double wide trailer as our parish hall/classroom facility but outgrew it years ago. Our current building project will be approximately 7,000 square feet, with offices, classrooms, a kitchen, etc. to facilitate the life of the community. With the blessing of God and the generosity of many, we hope to finish construction without taking on any additional debt. We continue to celebrate services almost every day, even if it is only reading Morning Prayers in the church, so that the Holy Temple may be open and those who can, may come and pray. Classes have been challenging during the past year of construction, and we look forward to being able to settle into the new building. The Lord continues to add to our small community as many as He wills, and we see new faces every weekend.

Metrical Data:

2022: 25 baptisms

2 Chrismations
1 Wedding
2 Funerals (one from Ft. Smith, AR)
2023: 8 Baptisms
0 Chrismations
0 Weddings
1 Funeral

**Archangel Gabriel Mission
Weatherford, TX
Fr. Chrysostom Arthur**

Liturgically, 2022 saw 9 Baptisms and 5 Chrismations. We have welcomed several inquirers and visitors throughout the year and welcomed a few local Orthodox families who have decided to make Archangel Gabriel their spiritual home. We have made numerous Catechumens in 2022 as well! We began to add Litya hymns and the blessing of the bread and wine to our Festal Great Vespers services. We have begun to have the Akathist hymn sung every Friday at 11am.

We've had many updates to our facilities and liturgical supplies over the last year. The purchase and renovation of our new building being our huge project! I would like to give a HUGE thank you to all who helped us in our demolition and renovation of our new church! We could not have done this without the help of our community! We now have three times the space we did in our rented unit and our purchase came with about an acre of land for future expansion.

For our youth, we saw the continuation of various programs and celebrations and the continuation of our Church School Program which for the first time was divided into upper and lower age groups.

Financially Archangel Gabriel has ended 2022 and begun 2023 on a VERY strong footing! Because of all your generous support we not only were able to meet any challenges, but we even continue to surpass all expectations, financially speaking, for such a new mission. In December of 2020 we were notified that Archangel Gabriel would be the recipient of the 2021 planting grant from the OCA. This was a huge blessing as it helped to pay me a full-time salary so that I could begin to focus all my efforts on the mission, without the need for outside employment. In January of last year, we were notified that we would continue to receive the grant for a second year! And in February of this year, we were notified that we would receive the third and final year of the planting grant. Another advantage of this grant is that it enabled us to put a large amount of money each month into our building fund which made the acquisition of new property possible.

On Palm Sunday of this year, we were blessed with the ordination of a Deacon to serve our community.

**St. Nektarios Mission
Waxahachie, TX
Fr. Basil Bieberdorf**

Since the last diocesan assembly, the St Nektarios mission in Waxahachie has continued both its efforts and its growth. Located in the center of the Midlothian-Waxahachie-Ennis points along the US 287 corridor, we remain the sole Orthodox parish of any jurisdiction south of Dallas and Tarrant counties in

the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Population growth in this area is significant, particularly for those working in the southern half of the Metroplex and those looking for more affordable housing when compared to the skyrocketing prices in the northern portions of the area.

Average Sunday attendance in 2023 (YTD) stands at 42, an increase of 20% compared to 2022, even with uneven consistency in individual attendance. Pascha attendance was 62. It is a rare Sunday without visitors and inquirers. Participation in Sunday catechesis after coffee hour is high. Our parish demographics have grown significantly younger since November 2018, and we are currently experiencing a baby boom (seven under the age of 3) along with another half-dozen pre-school and early elementary school aged children and a couple of middle schoolers. We maintain an active service schedule appropriate for a mission of our size, with good attendance at midweek services. (Recent Wednesday vespers have had 15-16 people, and 20 each at vespers and liturgy for Ascension, the latter served at 8 a.m.!) Our choir is quite good, with the diligence, devotion, and skill of our director, LaNelle Tadlock, both evident and appreciated. I am also grateful for the attentiveness of numerous faithful in administering the parish, cleaning and decorating the church, managing supplies and other material needs, maintaining the building, keeping up the grounds, and running our bookstore.

With all the positives, our mission does face some challenges. The first of those is the matter of my own part-time service, especially living an hour from the parish. A long-term plan to address this challenge is currently being developed. The second is the matter of facilities. Our church is a century old home, with a nave that is completely at capacity with our average attendance. An overflow room is working, but, when everyone is here, it is crowded. In the wake of COVID concerns, few people really enjoy standing shoulder to shoulder in a church where the summer air conditioning can struggle to keep up. We commissioned plans for a new 2000 sq ft church structure with a cost target of \$350k, to be built on our existing property, but actual bids are all more than double that amount. We have found it difficult to obtain bids at all, in fact. We continue to seek God's will and direction for this situation. The final challenge is the matter of uneven consistency in attendance. If our "2-3 Sundays per month" attendees came every weekend, our average weekly numbers would exceed 50.

I am grateful to be serving the St Nektarios parish, and I feel the parish and its community have a bright future in the southern regions of DFW.

St. Sava Church
Allen, TX
Fr. Photius Avant

The calendar year 2023 has been full of blessings for St. Sava Orthodox Church in Allen, TX. Every week, there are new visitors. Every week, there are new inquirers (who have a tendency to stay). There have been 5 baptisms, 10 chrismations, 3 confessions of faith, and one re-chrimation of one returning from apostasy (which includes the anointing of the knees), for a total of 19 new members since January. To accommodate our growing numbers, the parish hall has had extensive remodeling. We have launched a capital campaign of \$1.5M for a new parish hall. Iconography continues for the beautification of the temple.

The people of St. Sava continue to grow closer to one another, ministering to each other's needs. Five days a week, there are services with a priest, and one day a week, there is a reader's service. The addition of an additional priest and the ordination of a new deacon have made this possible. Catechism

is available each week as well as Sunday school. In response to the overwhelming need of the community, we are starting a K-8 cooperative school for the 2023-2024 school year, for which over 30 students are enrolled.

***All Saints Mission
Victoria, TX***

***St. Paul the Apostle Mission
Denison, TX***

***St. Jonah The Wonderworker
Alpine, TX***

Appalachian Deanery Report

to the

2023 Diocese of the South Assembly

Greenville, SC

July 19, 2023

St. Ambrose Mission (Roanoke, VA)
Priest Jeremy McKemy

Thank God, our mission has grown here in Roanoke. Since my assignment in May of 2022, our attendance has more than doubled. We continue to have periodic baptisms and chrismations of new converts. While we have not begun any outreach or evangelism in the community, people are finding us – due in part to YouTubers like Jordan Peterson and Jonathan Pageau.

We held a series of six catechism classes during Great Lent, and these were well attended. We have just begun another series in which we're studying patristic commentaries on Genesis. This also has been popular. We had 18 in attendance (including six online) for the first class, and about ten others who asked for a recording of the lecture due to work/school conflicts with our Tuesday evening meeting time. A local library is allowing us to freely use their meeting room.

Fr. Jeremy has met with the OCF at Virginia Tech on a few occasions. They are not particularly active (meeting once every month or two). Fr. Jeremy has encouraged them to meet more often and has offered to assist in any way he is able. Now that several officers of the OCF have graduated, some of the younger officers hope to increase group activity and meetings.

While there have been many positive developments at the Mission, we have some challenges as well, and they are associated with the space we're meeting in. Presently, we are renting a space that we get to utilize Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. The mission has been there for about five years – back when there were fewer than 20 members. But now we have about 80 members and are coming close to reaching our attendance limits (which is about 75).

Additionally, since it is a temporary space for us, every set of services requires set up and take down, which takes about 2-3 hours of time. The rental facility is a busy place, and about half of the weekday services we request are denied. For example, the Mission has not yet been able to hold liturgy on St. Ambrose's feast day.

We continue our search for a more permanent location (either purchase or rental). Such a space would allow us to function more like a parish (with weekday services, youth

activities, and classes) and less like a mission station. Hopefully, that would also allow us - in the coming years - to beautify our space and grow as we develop a more normal service and activity schedule.

St. Tikhon of Moscow Mission
Chattanooga, TN
Priest Seth Earl

St Tikhon Mission, as many missions and parishes, has continued to grow. We currently have a number of adults and children totaling over 100 active members, catechumens, and inquirers and attend services and classes on a regular basis.

This past Lent, the parish went through the process of expanding our Nave by knocking down another wall, installing french doors for overflow, and replacing ceilings that needed replacement. This summer, we're hoping to create a more all weather space for eating outside as we've not had space to enjoy coffee hour inside for quite some time.

We've instituted our first year of Church School this past Lent as well, and plan on continuing with it this Fall. Inquirers Class, Catechism Classes, and Adult Education is ongoing with a vibrant Men's and Women's Fellowship and Book Study.

We sent our first family to seminary this year, and have another member who will be enrolled in the Diaconal Vocations Program this year.

This October, the parish will be celebrating our Patronal Feast and 20th anniversary with a visit by Bishop Gerasim, of which the parish is looking forward to. We're expecting around 26 people to enter the Church in 2023 and are looking forward to 2024 and all God has in store for us.

St. Athanasius Parish Report: July 2022 through June 2023
Archpriest Justin Patterson

Our community continues to experience steady growth, though not as explosive as in some parts of the diocese. Our basic metrical numbers are as follows:

- average Sunday attendance is 140-160
- we serve on average five services per week (plus two services a month at our St. Nina Mission in Madison County, KY)
- we maintain a mailing list of parishioners, catechumens, regular inquirers, and friends of the parish with 340 email recipients (free to unsubscribe at any point)
- 113 families among our faithful and 5 families of catechumens and about 8 families of regular inquirers
- 6 child baptisms in past 12 months
- 12 adult receptions into the Faith in past 12 months
- 3 parishioners move or transfer away
- 5 parishioners transfer in
- 2 weddings
- 0 funerals

One of the highlights for our community this year was hosting the Diocesan Clergy Conference this past February, welcoming not only our own diocesan bishops, but also His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, along with the whole body of clergy of our diocese. Our parish faithful truly enjoyed this opportunity to host!

Additionally, we are seeing action on two fronts that are important for the future of Orthodoxy in Kentucky:

1. We continue to develop our St. Nina Mission in Madison County (currently located in Berea.) Our growth has been slow and our challenge has been the burden of setting up and breaking down our chapel routinely (since we do not possess a unique space for our services.) We are exploring options that give us more permanency. The main challenge with St. Nina is that we do not have the clergy to properly serve the mission more than twice a month. Provided a second priest arrives at St. Athanasius, we anticipate being able to move to weekly services with some Liturgies (not on Sundays until we decide to go in that direction permanently.) At present, we are developing St. Nina as a chapel with the possibility that the chapel community could grow into a viable parish.
2. As part of expanding the overall mission of St. Athanasius and Orthodoxy in Kentucky, our parish conducted a capital campaign to hire a second priest. We received robust support for this campaign and--coordinating our efforts with the diocese--are poised to bring on a second priest in 2023-24.

Protection of the Virgin Mary, Clarksville, TN
Rector: Archpriest David Arnold
Supply Priest: Priest David Ogan

2022/2023 Summary

Fr Peter had heart surgery (late May 2023) and is recovering very well, Glory be to God. He continues to have a regular presence as a retired Priest, and gives me guidance, direction, and correction often. I preside over Vespers and Divine Liturgy on weekends, and when the Liturgical Calendar calls for services on weekdays. Fr Peter has delegated remaining responsibilities: Treasurer, financial duties to Katherine (Karen) Baker and to the Warden, Daniel Canty, the website is being done weekly by Matushka Katherine, Choir duties to Daniel Winn. Ordering supplies as needed is a corporate duty that we all work on together. In all we continue to minister to the needs of the faithful, and to welcome, pray for and educate the newcomer. We continue to have an attendance at 50-60 strong. We currently have 15 catechumens at varied levels of growth and education.

The Church Property is still in need of major work. It is all of work just keeping the grounds in good condition, but we have improved the entire property with much work. The Church has purchased a John Deer Zero Turn lawnmower capable of caring for the 6-acre lot effectively. Septic and plumbing issues at Rectory and at the Church are still in need of major updating. We survive with what we have for now and make due. Construction projects are always in phase. We just added a Community Garden, and many new upgrades to the Landscaping. The rectory has undergone some renovations as well. Some full time dedication to the renovations still needed are forthcoming.

Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Mission has done monumental work with IOCC and the American Red Cross in the past 12 months. IOCC and the ARC and Inspiritus have almost reached the halfway milestone of 15 Homes in the KY

Area. (Total of 30 by October). Volunteers from our parish have been trained and have risen to the level of Team Leads deployed leading larger volunteer teams in the American Red Cross KY Rebuild. (Marshall and Graves County) Some of our parishioners have been showcased in up-to-date IOCC fliers and web-pages. One of our parishioners was even aired on local media. From Jan-October of 2023 I am the Life of Project Supervisor for the IOCC KY ARC Grant. (Largest US Grant to date) This current humanitarian effort has given me a chance to train young adults in our parish, to perform, professionally, many construction tasks. This empowers our young adults to be more capable of using those skills here on our Church Property and in the larger Church Community.

St. Maria of Paris
Cleveland, TN
Priest Kevin Rigdon

This past year at St Maria's has seen us complete our recovery from the effects of the pandemic. We have seen a 28% growth in regular attendance over the previous year and had the largest group of catechumens in our history. We have seen a small growth in financial giving as well.

In community outreach, St Maria's has celebrated our 6th year providing meals for the local homeless shelter, and our 4th annual St Nicholas Backpack drive for the same. We are also reestablishing our St Maria's charity drive since the pandemic by partnering with a local non-profit called Got Her Covered to combat period poverty in our schools and homeless community.

We continue to rent our current space while actively looking for property to establish a permanent home.

Dormition Orthodox Church, Norfolk, VA
Priest Maximus Gibson, Rector

There have been many blessings and much good has occurred at Dormition Orthodox Church since July 2022. Fr. Maximus Gibson began serving as rector at Dormition in July 2022, preceded by the fruitful and loving labors of Fr. Mark Hodal. There is a solid core of long time parishioners at Dormition who are deeply committed to the success of the parish, and in the past twelve months there have been a good number of new parishioners who have arrived who have jumped in to assist with parish care and ministries.

Sunday attendance averages around 100 persons. Attendance at Saturday evening or Wednesday evening Vespers is much less. Besides the Resurrectional services on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, Vespers or Matins (or sometimes both) are usually served Tuesday through Friday. Attendance is usually very light but varied at these daily services, and they have provided a good opportunity for additional times for confession and relationship

building between priest and parishioners.

We have received 16 persons by Baptism or Chrismation this past year. Two were infants and 14 were adults and their families. Most of these have actively plugged in to serving in the parish in various ways. There are presently two families of catechumens and some additional inquirers who attend faithfully. Until Lent, we had a weekly Basics of Orthodoxy Class that met Wednesday evenings. Attendance would vary between 5 to 25 people.

In Fall of 2022, a professor at Regent University invited Fr. Maximus to come and serve Vespers and answer student questions about Orthodoxy. An OCF-like group then formed at Regent, made up of many students interested in Orthodoxy (there was only one Orthodox student involved, along with a few inquirers already attending Dormition). The group met throughout Fall and Spring and plans to begin meeting again in Fall 2023. Some students from this group have visited Dormition and other area parishes, and some have stuck around as inquirers.

A family from the Outer Banks (about an hour and a half away from Dormition) was received at Dormition this year. They report that there are a couple of other families in their town interested in Orthodoxy, and that there is a group of Serbians in their area who are Orthodox and meet for Readers Services occasionally (in Serbian). There is hope that there may be an opportunity for beginning mission work in the Outer Banks area.

During the past year, two funerals have been served at Dormition, one of which was for former rector Archpriest Theodore Panchak. This service was especially blessed, with participation by clergy and faithful from neighboring parishes in the GOA and AOCNA. Two weddings were also served this year for young members of the parish.

Parishioners at Dormition especially excel at giving generously. Special collections have been taken with significant funds given for support for three seminarian families; a parish family in need; the Diocese of Alaska; the local Crisis Pregnancy Center; a FOCUS school supply drive; and a thank you gift to our choir director for her service. There have been two bake sales (one in Fall and one in Spring) and a Christmas Cookie Walk that also generated significant contributions. During Lent, groups from the parish helped serve food at a local homeless shelter, and recently the parish collected in-kind donations to assemble blessing bags for distribution to the homeless. Standard monthly giving in the parish has been consistently healthy.

For many months now, there has been a monthly parish game night. Recently men's and women's fellowship groups have formed with open invitations for fellowship outings. A women's book club has also formed and has been meeting for several months now.

At this year's annual meeting, the parish moved to form a building committee with the goal of developing plans for building a permanent temple in the next 5 to 10 years. One of the biggest challenges facing Dormition is population transience. There is frequent flux from military families, college students, and working professionals who move in and out of the area. Along with this challenge, however, there is a strong core of committed parishioners, as well as much energy at present for seeing God's work done at Dormition.

St. Cyprian of Carthage Orthodox Church
Midlothian, VA
Archpriest David Arnold

Growth is the theme of our Deanery and Diocese, and thankfully at St. Cyprian of Carthage, as well. The wonderfully constant presence of inquirers that seem to keep attending and bringing others, eventually becoming Catechumens, has caused the need to schedule three annual four week inquirer sessions as an introduction to Orthodox Christianity. These sessions are taking place in the winter, summer, and fall. Each of them are preparatory to twelve week periods of Catechism that precede opportunities to be received into the Church on Holy Saturday, Holy Theophany, and the Feast of St. Cyprian of Carthage. Visitors, even continuing catechists, are allowed to attend the catechism classes, making for a full year of organized adult education in the parish.

While we began to pursue consultation for the construction of a parish hall back in 2018, various deterrents caused us delay, but this year has been full of planning for this needed component of our master plan that was developed back in 2008. We rapidly approach 35% schematic design completion, then consultation from a builder in order to receive an initial cost estimate. This will move us closer to sight work plans and site development for the new building.

The parish has recently formed a chapter of Orthodox Christians for Life, in addition to already having a number of active supporters of the Richmond Crisis Pregnancy Center. Supporting unplanned pregnancy with an option other than abortion continues to be necessary since the provision for legal abortion is likely to remain in our nation, despite the various recent legislative and judicial rulings or changes in law. At least the faithful of our parish can practice what the Church teaches regarding life, while offering means to assist those who are not aware of that teaching. Our conviction does not need to be made into divisive political rhetoric that only serves to bring division among us. Nevertheless, the issue promises to be made just that, a tool for division.

Our parish continues to fill a barrel with food items for donation to the local FeedMore warehouse that supplies state wide food distribution. Our next barrel should bring the total of donated foods to over half a ton. A group of young men have accepted the task of revitalizing the parish garden beds, restoring raised beds and working on weed control, already enjoying the harvest of beans, cucumbers, beets, carrots, with a good bit of the season to go. While the produce is being enjoyed by members without a garden, excess veggies will also go to FeedMore.

St. Andrew's Orthodox Church
Ashland, VA
Archpriest Adam Sexton

At St. Andrews parish in Ashland, VA the theme of the last year has been Constant Catechumens. We are regularly incorporating a steady and sustained supply of folks into the ranks of those preparing for Holy Illumination with regular Seekers Session Q&A gatherings for catechetical instruction and discussion. There has been an uptick in baptisms, marriages and chrismations over the last year and these seem to be continuing on the increase. We also have a steady stream of inquirers and long term "lurkers" who continue to "Come and See".

With glorious hope in the resurrection to eternal life, St. Andrews has also celebrated three funerals this year; an increase for sure but also a true blessing in parish unity and fidelity.

With our numbers swelling at a sustained rate, the need to expand our worship space has made itself abundantly clear. St. Andrews needs to build! Well, at least we cannot ignore this eventuality that shortly is becoming immanent. We plan to inaugurate a capital campaign for this purpose in the near future. Toward this end we have established an Expansion Committee tasked with fleshing out possibilities for increasing the use of the current property or the potential necessity to relocate (though this is a last resort). To jumpstart this expansion, a generous member of the parish has recently acquired the property adjacent to the parish and will quit claim it to St. Andrews as soon as a few administrative steps for obtaining diocesan approval are completed. The Expansion Committee is gathering info on the potential combination of parcels and eventual building across both lots.

The parish has undertaken many overdue and necessary repairs and updates to the current facility as well this year. The urgent water infiltration conditions under the building which have threatened the foundation for years have been remediated and the encapsulation of said space has been accomplished with the help of a small loan from the Diocese. Also, the deck space attached to our trapeza which was rotten in many places and no longer usable for safety reasons has been repaired and restored to use.

Our increased numbers have illumined a need for greater focus on over all safety and emergency preparedness on a parish level.

Our newly established Safety Committee has made great strides in articulating a robust Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and has made many upgrades such as installing an AED unit, fire extinguishers throughout the building, and bringing in the Fire Marshall to guide us in bringing the facility to a place where we meet fire codes. We have hosted and made use of a CPR and AED training class for the parish which was well attended and which resulted in 12 parish members becoming certified in CPR and the proper use of our AED device.

St. Andrews has also implemented a Safety Patrol to provide an increased awareness of activities and people during and after services and fellowship. This is with a primary focus on child safety and security.

This year St. Andrews has formally established a ProLife Committee which has resulted in a very successful and enthusiastic affiliation with Orthodox Christians for Life and a chapter established at St. Andrews.

We have seen an expanded Church School/Youth Group this year at St. Andrews with many young children and a number of teens participating and learning.

Our choir membership has swelled to allow for more complex and beautiful liturgical arrangements. This has been largely due to our capable choir director's dedicated effort.

The icon beautification effort continues in our nave and sanctuary with frescos installed and the iconostas currently being updated.

There has been a robust broadening in community outreach and engagement efforts at St. Andrews. We continue with our "5th Monday Feeding Program" participation in Richmond as well as to participate in FOCUS North America's "Backpack Project" for the 6th year in a row directly benefiting local children in need in Hanover Co. schools. We participated this year in the first annual Hanover Children and Youth Festival as well. There is also a much increased and sustained participation in intraparish social activities and outings.

Our mission parish in Culpeper proceeds steadily onward and, has the potential to be looking toward renting a fixed meeting space in the foreseeable future.

Finally, our preliminary mission outreach on Virginia's Middle Peninsula to the east continues to materialize with regular monthly gatherings in Deltaville and currently with 7 catechumens! We hope to establish this group as a mission station as soon as circumstances and Deanery staffing possibilities align.

Glory to God for all things!

St Anne in Oak Ridge

We have had an eventful year. Last Pentecost we tore down walls in order to make room for the faithful. That Pentecost we had nearly 200 in attendance. Since then our Sunday morning numbers have steadily held at around 160-180. Because of this strong growth, adding nearly 30 souls to the Church last calendar year and then 27 being added this past Lazarus Saturday, we have been looking for new property in order to properly account for our numbers as our current property has been deemed too small for the kind of growth we have seen and expect to see. By God's providence we found a 7.6 acre lot which we could pay for in cash and plan to close on our feast day on July 25th!

We have settled on an architect and plan to launch a focused fundraising campaign at the end of this calendar year. Our giving has been strong even without a fundraising campaign so I am hopeful we will be able to raise the necessary funds to begin building in just a few years.

Most of our challenges are related to our cramped space and our rather intensive growth in a short period of time. Our online directory has around 300 souls associated with St. Anne's. Our 4,400 sq ft building and our limited parking is just not equipped for these kinds of numbers.

This year has also seen the development of a steady monthly women and men's group gathering and a steady teen gathering. Dn. Raphael has been incredibly helpful in making sure things at St. Anne's run smoothly. I have a few candidates in mind for diaconal ministry. While I believe I need a second priest sooner than later, to better capture our momentum and create a firm foundation moving forward, I am looking more immediately to try and develop some more deacons for specific ministries of administration and teaching in the upcoming years.

Mississippi River Deanery Report
Diocese of the South - Diocesan Conference 2023
Presented by Priest Jason Foster, Dean

The Mississippi River Deanery (MRD) has experienced a year of growth. Our churches are being visited by those interested in Orthodoxy on a regular basis. Two new priests, Fr. Athansios Kombos and Fr Herman Garrison, have transitioned to the deanery to serve missions in the East, TX. Fr Silouan Cohen is currently attached to Holy Nativity in Shreveport to assist with ministry efforts there and the greater deanery. Fr Alexis Baldwin was re-assigned to Ss George and Alexandra in Ft Smith to build upon the distinguished ministerial service of Fr John Maxwell who recently retired. Consequently, our three missions in Mississippi need priests to serve liturgies and offer pastoral support. Lastly, Fr Michael Rehmet has been assigned to Holy Resurrection in Clinton, MS to serve as an intern under Fr Paul Yerger for one-year, effective August 1. Overall, the MRD is moving forward with Gospel of our Lord, planning new temples, or seeking space to accommodate those seeking Christ and His Church. Please find following the individual reports of our parishes and missions.

Holy Resurrection
Clinton, MS

Statistics:

Baptisms with Chrismation:	9
Chrisinations:	5
Marriages	none
Deaths	none
Average Sunday Attendance	80

Attendees (Attend at least monthly whether members or not): 77 adults and 48 children)

Church School – Until the last year or two we have never had a consistent church school program. But this year we had six classes of youth meeting almost every Sunday for 20 minutes immediately after Liturgy, in addition to an adult class after the meal.

For many years we have had a bookstore adjacent to the dining room. It is well stocked with books, icons, and such, and most newcomers check it out and our bookstore manager makes them feel at home. The bookstore also has lots of comfortable chairs and has come to be a kind of living room. After the meal a layman teaches an adult class or discussion, and some stay around and visit for hours afterward.

Thanks be to God.

In Christ,
Archpriest Paul Yerger

Christ the Saviour Mission McComb, MS

Baptisms/Chrismations: 3

Catechumens: 0

Normal attendance: 20 adults (this includes a few adults irregularly attending)

Buildings: Parsonage, Church Hall, Priest office building, and Church all owned

Ministries: Sunday Typica (Readers Services as scheduled)

Previously, Divine Liturgy Vespers once a month (ended June 2023)

The buildings at Christ the Saviour are in need of maintenance but remain in working order. There is still potential and opportunity for growth and renewed life in the community and the area surrounding. An estimated 12,000+ people live in McComb as of 2021.

Pike County, in which McComb is situated, is home to 39,000+. The McComb micropolitan area is home to 52,000+ people. The city of Brookhaven is a mere 30 minute (25 miles) drive from McComb and is home to 34,000+ people. New folks who live both near McComb and over 45 minute's drive from Christ the Saviour continue to attend. The normal Liturgy attendance was double the previous year.

The Mission remains an island in the South West corner of Mississippi. The four closest Orthodox communities to it are all in Louisiana, 60+ miles away, one way drive. Holy Cross Mission Station in Hattiesburg the next closest, is 70 miles, one way. In an age when many Orthodox commute to Church, the generally accessible ministry area population of nearly 100,000 people has often proven to be sustainable. I have been blessed to serve here. This Mission's previous trajectory toward decline has been somewhat mitigated. In 2023, CtS received 3 new converts. It's been nearly a decade since this has happened. It is a sustainable shift. Without regular (at least monthly) services from a priest, it's possible the positive trajectory will reverse. A solid vision is imperative to keep the momentum going. This implemented vision needs to be methodical and well thought out.

Respectfully submitted,

Priest Alexis Baldwin

Holy Cross Mission Station Hattiesburg, MS

Baptisms/Chrismations: 7/0

Catechumens: 3

Normal attendance: 25 adults, 10 children

Buildings: Partially renovated church building/attached hall on .3 acre lot

Ministries: Divine Liturgy and Vespers once a month Occasionally, in months with 5 Sundays, Vespers and Divine Liturgy twice that month. When I'm not serving, lay led Typica on Sundays and lay led Vespers most Wednesdays and Saturdays. Faithful participate in regular online community discussions/fellowship, online book club held throughout the year, online workshops, Monday through Friday Online Mission Daily Scripture and Prayer, and Catechumen classes as scheduled. They've also participated in the local Christmas parade.

Holy Cross has continued growing this year; several new members/catechumens/inquirers. We've continued to renovate/paint the church chapel. By God's Grace, folks donated paint, supplies, and time. A new hardwood floor was installed in the altar. Several tables for liturgical use were professionally built and donated. Hosting His Grace Gerasim in 2022 was a highlight. Recently, the Mission hosted a Crawfish boil which was very well attended. The level of commitment in all areas of community life has continued to increase. This will continue, by all indications, going forward. In terms of budget, there is a ways to go before the community can support a full-time priest, but they are dutifully working towards this goal.

Respectfully submitted,
Priest Alexis Baldwin

St. Catherine Mission Station Columbus, MS

Baptisms/Chrismations: 0
Catechumens (Inquirer): 1
Normal attendance: 25 adults, 10 children

Buildings: 1,400+ sq ft church building which houses the chapel, two bathrooms, as well as two other rooms: one for a bookstore and the other for fellowship.

Ministries: Sunday Divine Liturgy and Saturday Vespers once a month. Some months, also an extra Vespers and Divine Liturgy (often major feasts) when it is able to be scheduled. When I'm not serving, lay led Typica on Sundays, as well as readers Vespers frequently on Wednesdays throughout each month. Some faithful participate in regular online community discussions/fellowship, the online book club held throughout the year, online workshops, Monday through Friday Online Mission Daily Scripture and Prayer, and the Friday night Online Catechumen classes. Laity have organized monthly brotherhood and sisterhood monthly meetings, in addition to various events and fellowship days. Recently, Dr. Jeannie Constantinou was hosted and offered a two day retreat. It was phenomenal and gathered Orthodox from all over the state.

St. Catherine continued to see growth this year. The community continues various beautification projects, liturgical item purchases, maintenance, and interior additions. New members coming from the towns outside of the city of Columbus continued to inject substantial vitality into its already growing community. This growth by numbers will possibly continue in the future. In terms of budget, the funds are not quite in place to support a full-time priest, but they are dutifully working towards this goal.

Respectfully submitted,
Priest Alexis Baldwin

St. George Orthodox Church Memphis/Bartlett, TN

After a year of weekly catechism, we chrismated a family of four and another adult on Lazarus Saturday. After taking six weeks off after Pascha we resumed classes for three catechumens and began classes for five new inquirers. Also included in these classes are five cradle Orthodox who had not had any organized catechism. For alumni, (the newly illumined 2021-2023) we have a weekly book study on St. Athanasius' On the Incarnation.

We have two matins and two vespers services each week. After Sunday liturgy we have a potluck meal and often at other festal liturgies. During Lent we kept our weekly schedule, substituting the Pre-Sanctified on Wednesdays. Since our parish's entry into the OCA in 2000, the three congregations of Orthodox in Memphis have celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy with the Divine Liturgy and did so again this year. We served eleven services during Holy Week and had midnight service for Pascha. Pascha Sunday we got together for Agape Vespers, an egg hunt and pizza. Attendance at Pascha was a few under 70. Our average attendance on Sundays is 45.

In September the Parish had a food event for the public, serving blini and other delicious things in our large pavilion. In February we hosted an Open House and Bake Sale also for the public and took in two inquirers as a result.

Our income projections are behind so far this year. We aimed high but have had some members move who were contributing generously. Again this year we have received earmarked donations to pay down the principal on our mortgage.

Our church building was built in the 1950s and many things are worn out. The most expensive has been our air conditioning system for the nave, narthex, and the fellowship hall. We were fortunate to be able to add \$57,000 to our mortgage loan from Orthodox Church Capitalization Investment Fund (OCCIF) to cover the cost, without having to start a new loan and nor pay fees. For other needed work, the Parish Board elected to spend down some of the income from 2022. The main items were to waterproof a troublesome exterior wall, have our nave carpet dyed and the nave windows tinted, UV being the culprit. Other items we need are to replace the acoustic ceiling and carpet in the fellowship hall.

Our Parish Board meets monthly, takes minutes and presents financials at each meeting.

The land next to St. George is being developed. There will be town homes, condominiums, apartments and retail. The project has been going on for a

year now and will take another four to complete. The Parish Board is discussing the impact of this and how to prepare for and accommodate more members who will join St. George as a result.

By God's grace, the prayers of the saints, and the blessing of our shepherds we are determined to "partake of Him more perfectly" and give Him glory.

Your Unworthy Brother in Christ,
Archpriest Mark Sutton

Ss George and Alexandra Orthodox Church Ft. Smith, AR

This was a historic year in the life of Ss. George and Alexandra Mission. Archpriest John Maxwell retired after 26 years of ministry in Fort Smith. Fr. John was the founding pastor back in 1997 and has been faithfully serving here since. A large celebration was had for him on Sunday June 11th with His Grace Bishop Gerasim presiding over the Divine Liturgy and issuing a Gramota from the Holy Synod to Fr. John for his many years of dedication to the Orthodox Church in America. Joining us for the celebration were the faithful of St. John's Mission in Rogers, AR which Fr. John also founded. Also, that weekend we were blessed to receive our new pastor Fr. Alexis Baldwin who moved here from Mississippi with his wife, Matushka Veronika, and their multitude of boys!

Throughout the year, we've generally seen an increase in attendance at liturgy and more inquirers visiting. We received three young men into the Church the Sunday before Pentecost. We had one infant baptism in February, and thankfully no funerals.

Another highlight of the year, was the completion of the renovation of our church hall. We now have upgraded kitchen and bathroom facilities. A larger dining area. Separate bookstore and office spaces and perhaps most importantly proper classrooms for Sunday School.

Our Mission is on stable financial ground and we look forward to a bright future with Fr. Alexis and his family. Fort Smith is a growing community and we hope to reap the benefits of that.

Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest Paul Fetsko

Saint John of Chicago Mission Rogers, Arkansas

We are thankful to God for continued growth at St John Mission in Northwest Arkansas. Like many of our missions and parishes we have seen growth through catechumens, and new people moving to the area who are already Orthodox Christians. We have a number of new babies and a growing young adult group.

School program continues to teach our elementary age kids and Fr John teaches the Youth Group throughout the school year. We have active men's and women engaged in service and fellowship.

Since our last Diocesan Assembly we have had 4 baptisms, 3 chrismations, and 1 funeral. We currently have 7 adult catechumens.

Submitted,
Archpriest John Wehling

Holy Nativity of the Lord Mission Shreveport, LA

Holy Nativity was blessed with continued growth and unity over the last year. We baptized and or chrismated 14 people and we currently have 15 Catechumens and seven inquirers. Our summer attendance is back up to 120 and our average attendance for the year was approximately 150 to 160. Due to our need for space, we have been working with Presv Mirela Tudora on the design of our future temple. God willing, it will become a reality for us within the next five years.

In March, we increased our community outreach by partnering with our local food bank. Once a month, we deliver food items to approximately 40 people who live in a low-income apartment complex. Also, we are gradually increasing our efforts with children and families in a local urban area of Shreveport that face many challenges. While our presence is felt throughout the year, our ultimate goal is to plant an urban mission that caters to the specific spiritual needs of this community.

Other things to be noted that happened over the last year include the following: Holy Nativity hosted our first, of what we hope to be, an annual choir retreat for our deanery and beyond, our annual Christmas play should have been up for an Oscar, All Saints Winter and Summer Camps had over 120 and 300 participants, respectively, and we had the privilege of having two interning priests with us since September.

The greatest challenge we faced as a community last year was the passing of Sophia Cohen, the daughter of Fr Silouan and Matushaka Nonna. Sophia brought all of us closer together and continues to do so in many and various ways. May her memory be eternal!

Respectfully submitted,
Priest Jason Foster, Dean

St. Matthew the Apostle Orthodox Mission Baton Rouge, LA

St. Matthew the Apostle Mission Baton Rouge, LA Parish Report 2022 The past year has been busy and steady. One big disappointment is that we have not been able to build on our property or find a suitable location to move into and so have focused on maximizing our current space.

We have enjoyed our first ongoing church school program and were able to host Bishop Gerasim for a Nativity Fast Retreat. The mission continues to enjoy a steady stream of inquirers and catechumens and have been blessed with an influx of newborn babies. We are averaging ~70 people on a Sunday and enjoyed a large crowd at Pascha. In the fall, we are planning to re-focus our efforts on raising funds for a new building whether that means a construction project or moving into another suitable space.

Respectfully Submitted,
Priest Joshua Trant

St Ephraim Mission Longview, TX

In January of 2023, we celebrated the feast day of St. Ephraim with liturgy in a rented space. Beginning in May 2023, we started meeting weekly for Vespers on Wednesday evenings in a rented chapel in downtown Longview, Texas at First Presbyterian Church. We have an average attendance of 24 faithful and inquirers. We have a trained vocal and choral instructor who has volunteered to form a choir for the mission. They meet every Monday evening to learn basic sight reading, vocal technique, and the responses for the Vespers service. We are in the first stages of forming a mission council and completing the necessary paperwork. In July, we will begin an online discussion group to learn about the cycle of services and reading/serving in the altar.

Respectfully submitted,
Priest Herman Garrison

St Paisios the Athonite Mission Nacogdoches, TX

By an ecclesial blessing, St. Paisios the Athonite Mission was, after an operation pause in wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, officially reactivated in September 2022. The reactivation was greatly assisted by Westminster Presbyterian Church (Nacogdoches, TX), which has for the last year provided 1600 sq. ft. of space at the presbyterian church facilities for use by the mission. The presbyterian church's hospitality enabled the mission to begin offering in September one service per week (typically vespers). In spring of this year, the mission moved to two Divine Liturgies per month. And now, beginning in July, the mission has progressed to a full-time liturgical schedule, including weekly, Sunday liturgies and a mid-week daily vespers.

The next phase for the mission is preparation to move to a new, physical location. Active plans are presently underway to lease a 2,300 sq. ft. facility in a busy area of Nacogdoches and which is across the street from Stephen F. Austin State University. This new location would provide for the mission into the foreseeable future, and is to include a chapel, fellowship hall, kitchen, two restrooms and priest's office. Through the prayers of St. Paisios, our patron, and the most holy Theotokos, may the mission become well-rooted in Nacogdoches and continue to grow in numbers and spirit.

Average Sunday Liturgy attendance: 20 to 30.

Respectfully submitted,
Priest Athanasios Kombos

North Florida Deanery Report--2023 Diocesan Assembly

As the rest of the Diocese has, the North Florida Deanery has seen lots of growth. Nearly every parish reports many inquirers, catechumens and many baptisms/chrisinations over the past year. This year the Deanery welcomed in three new clergyman.

Annunciation Russian Mission, Jacksonville, FL (2012)

Archpriest Oleksii Rukavytsia, Attached

For some time, Igumen Arkady had desired to leave parish life and return to the monastery. An opportunity arose and an opportunity was taken. In February Fr Oleksii Rukavytsia was attached to Annunciation. He recently immigrated from the Ukraine along with his Matushka and twin 18-year-old daughters. Fr Oleksii has been well received. The parish is both strong and in a season of transition/adjustment.

St. Alexis Mission, Palm Coast, FL (1995)

Archpriest David Rucker, Priest-in-Charge

The community is making great progress this year transitioning from a chaplaincy/small church model of ministry to the Pastoral Model of ministry. They have added 10 new members in the past year and have both catechumens and inquirers. They now have a regular midweek bible study, and the Sunday school program has added another class. They have tripled the balance of their building fund and are looking for a building of their own.

St. Andrew the First Called, New Port Richey, FL (1976)

Priest Patrick Smith, Rector

St Andrews continues to thrive. Income in the past year has increased significantly giving them the ability to continue their program of improving facilities—from maintenance to expansion. The Youth and Church School programs are very active. They will be sending a team to Project Mexico in 2024, they serve the homeless, sent 14 kids to St Christopher camp, etc. Soon the parish will outgrow its present facility.

Sts. Joachim & Anna Mission, The Villages, FL (2021)

Priest John Chudik, Priest-in-Charge

The community is now in its third year and has moved into its own 2000sf facility and continues to grow. They are occupying their Church under a “Temporary” C.O. and once final work is completed, they will receive their Final C.O. As an outreach they support the Sumter County Sheriff’s Food Bank.

St. John the Merciful Mission, Kissimmee, FL (2019)

Priest David Galloway--- Priest-in Charge

St. John the Merciful was orphaned on September 1st, 2022, and for nine months they had no priest in residence. It was held together by an excellent mission council and their deacon, Dn Mark Buchman with Fr Dan Hickman coaching things along as needed. The parish was regularly visited by a rotation of clergy in the central Florida area and when a priest was not available Dn Mark served Obednitsa. During this season the parish lost two families and several others. In June, Fr David Galloway, (SVS '23)

was assigned as the Priest-in-Charge and there was an immediate uptick in attendance, lost sheep returning and some newbies. The mission is returning to life--- Wednesday Vespers, Catechumen classes, church school, men's and women's groups, and a monthly panikhida.

Also, in June 2023 Fr Marius Buzatelu was officially received into the DOS and is residing in Kissimmee. He is a supply priest for the deanery right now helping out primarily in Tampa and in Gainesville, and attending all other services at St John the Merciful and is also available to assist the mission.

St. John the Theologian Mission Station, Gainesville, FL (1983)

Priest Marius Buzatelu/ Dn James Marth

In the Fall of 2022, the mission began to have Liturgies every Sunday. In November Fr James Hargrave of the Antiochian Archdiocese moved from British Columbia, Canada to Gainesville to take over the mission. Fr James is from Gainesville, known to many and longtime OCMC missionary. At the border, his Matushka was not allowed to enter the U.S. because she did not have a green card. Fr James kissed her goodbye and then he and their son continued their journey. All the paperwork was in place for his release to the DOS, OCA. Then the Antiochian's lost their Metropolitan and the transfer was put on hold. And then Matushka got sick, and he went back to help and decided it was best to be together as a family until her green card is issued which lawyers tell us will be complete by the end of 2023. Then they will return as family. All their things were moved to Gainesville.

Today Fr James conducts a Wednesday night Zoom Bible Study that is well attended, and Dn James serves Obednitsa three Sundays per month and Fr Marius serves once per month. The mission is growing and income is stable. Dn James presently is the de facto leader/pastor of the community.

St. Justin Martyr, Jacksonville, FL (1994)

Archpriest Theodore Pisarchuk, Rector; Fr Jacob Hatch, Associate Priest

At the end of the year the parish will have its original mortgage paid off in time to start a new mortgage. On the average Sunday there is not enough room in either the Church or the Fellowship Hall. They have hired an architect and have a preliminary plan. A fundraising campaign will be launched in the fall. The Fellowship Hall and Church were designed for expansion, so in essence two new buildings will be built exactly adjacent to existing and then the dividing walls will be removed. All necessary infrastructure is already in place. The parish youth program has recovered nicely since Covid as have all the other ministries. The cemetery has about 100 residents.

St. Mark, Bradenton, FL (1979)

Archpriest Jonathan Cholcher, Rector

The parish continues to grow nicely, and its roots are growing deeply and strong. In the past year both a Men's and Women's Ministry was started. In June they held their second annual Vacation Church School. Three of their teens attended Camp St. Christopher. The parish continues to move forward with plans to build a much-needed Fellowship Hall.

St. Nina the Enlightener Russian Mission, Orlando, FL (2018)

Archpriest Andrey Syrkin

Considering all the tumult introduced into our Slavic oriented communities due to the war in the Ukraine, St Nina is doing well. They are growing, and now for the first time have catechumens. Fr Andrey is now doing three sermons every Sunday, Russian, English and a children's sermon. They are now establishing a building fund.

St. Philip the Apostle Mission, Tampa, FL (2005)

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino, Priest-in-Charge

Serving others continues to be a touchstone at St Philip's. They continue to support the Northern Uganda Medical Center (<http://www.ugandaclinic.org/>) which the community established. They regularly collect food for the poor, baby goods for women choosing not to have an abortion and serve lunch monthly to the homeless. Notably Fr Joseph was in a serious car accident during Lent and though hobbled, he continues to serve diligently. Presently Fr Marius Buzatelu who is new to our deanery and lives in Kissimmee has been assisting Fr Joseph on Sundays with a deacon rotating in when Fr Marius supplies elsewhere.

St. Raphael Orthodox Church, Inverness, FL (2002)

Igumen Sergious (Gerken), Rector

Despite having hived off many people to help plant Sts. Joachim and Anna Mission, St Raphael is "rebounding." Fr Sergious reports that great strides have been made in motivating parishioners, friends and neighbors with the development of the Nature Wildlife Habitat walkabout. Park benches have been installed and centerpiece rock fountain is nearing completion.

St. Simeon Church, Titusville, FL (1966)

Priest Kyrill Williams, Priest-in Charge

The parish has made a remarkable turnaround since the arrival of Fr Kyrill. The nave is full on Sunday mornings and the people are working diligently to be able to pay Fr Kyrill a fulltime salary. Eventually they will need to either expand their church, build a fellowship hall or buy a new property.

St. Stephen Orthodox Church, Orlando, FL. (1969)

Priest Daniel Hickman, Rector

The parish is in the midst of fundraising for their building program. They have both money in the bank and \$750k in pledges. The church hosted an intern in the summer of 2022. The community celebrated Fr. John Ealy's 50th anniversary of ordination with a visit from Bishop Gerasim. The deanery is grateful to Fr Dan for his leadership in restarting St Christopher Camp.

Valdosta Mission Station, Valdosta FL

The Valdosta mission got crushed by Covid but we continue to have a number of inquirers and Orthodox Christians in the Valdosta area. We still are maintaining the website.

2023 South Florida Deanery (DOS/OCA) Report

Christ the Saviour Cathedral (Rector: Fr. Joseph Lucas)

The Cathedral had another joyous and prosperous year. In total, 7 adult converts were received by either Chrismation or Baptism, and 4 children were baptized. We had 1 marriage, and no funerals. Financially, 2022 saw the highest income of donations in our history, as well as the highest average Sunday attendance since we began keeping track in the 90s, with 100 – 110 weekly. It is safe to say that, not only have we fully recovered from the pandemic, but are flourishing and even surpassing what was possible beforehand.

Presently, the Cathedral is involved in three projects. First, we have plans approved by the county to expand our parking lot to accommodate the increase in attendance. This job is currently out for bid with contractors. Second, we are about to launch a YouTube show that will enable viewers to email their questions in and have them answered live. And third, we have formed a committee to move forward with the next stage of building on our property: affordable housing for families and retirees on the land behind the Cathedral. This is a project that was originally conceived by our founder, Fr. George Gladky, approved by Abp Dimitri, and included on our original schematics for the property. When completed, this housing will be exclusively for active parishioners who have met appropriate screening standards. We hope to finish this project by the end of 2024, and then begin investigating ways to expand the size of the temple to accommodate up to 250 attendees as a final stage of building.

Ss Peter and Paul Church (Priest-in-charge: Fr. Joseph Lucas)

The parish property is temporarily closed until further notice.

St Nicholas Church (Rector: Fr. Igor Kseniuk)

During the past year, the parish of St. Nicholas in Fort Lauderdale continued its gradual growth in attendance. A few younger singers joined the choir. There are a number of faithful who recently moved to Florida and started attending the services as well. The parish is gradually moving towards proportional giving, a concept that is known but not very well practiced by Slavs, who make the main part of the parish. Among the projects that were accomplished this year - the church building was treated against the termites. Because of that, a new landscaping design was done by the side of the church. During Holy Week, the church grounds, together with the church hall and the former rectory building were flooded. Glory to God that the church building itself did not get any water inside. With the help of Matushka and a few other parishioners, we were able to clean-up the buildings and get them ready for Paschal services. Currently, the parish is in process of installing a new sign, which will be double-sided and much more noticeable.

Since July of 2022, there were 19 infant baptisms and 4 funerals in our parish. The average Sunday attendance is about 35 - 45 people, with total "membership" (work in progress) of about 45-50 parishioners. Average Vespers attendance is about 5-12 people; about the same amount of people come for Wednesday's Akathists to St. Nicholas. We hope and pray that we will be able to move forward in establishing a vibrant and a financially stable parish.

St. Herman of Alaska Church (Rector: Fr. Philip Kontos)

We've chrismated 3 people so far (1 in January and 2 at Pascha on Great and Holy Saturday) and currently have 5 catechumens and a couple of seekers; so we are on track to possibly match last year's 8 Chrismations/1 baptism. We're currently having two catechism classes a week, a book study/continuing education by Zoom and a class is in the works re: an Orthodoxy 201 class for the freshly minted Orthodox Christians who want more instruction. I'm blessed with very curious catechumens and "newbies." We're getting ready to propose some renovations to the Church Hall (indoor bathrooms, central air, and an office) having put together architectural plans and getting several bids for the work.

Our weekly attendance at Great Vespers is between 15-20 people and Sunday Liturgy is from about 30-40 people (even off season), so we're growing a bit as well.

St. James Church (Rector: Fr. Maximus Urbanowicz)

This year our parish had the had 11 Baptisms, 1 Chrismation, and 1 marriage. We currently have an average Sunday attendance of 90 – 100, and have 5 catechumens. We are also in process of refinishing domes in gold (now finalized for November), and have just ordered a 6 ft Wood carved 'Czar Russian Cross' for departed (which will stand behind where departed candles presently are).

St. Demetrius Church (Rector: Fr. Gleb McFatter)

St. Demetrius Mission experienced a joyful Pascha with an overflowing church attendance. The best since before the pandemic. So far in 2023 we have baptized 1 adult and 1 child. We have not had any deaths within the parish, nor any weddings. We launched the new website: stdemetriuschurch.org and look forward to adding additional pages in the near future. My altar server (Michael Solomatin) has applied for entrance into the OCA Diaconal Program and are awaiting word of his acceptance.

Holy Cross Church (Rector: Fr. George Volkovinsky)

Fr. George, who is a reserve military chaplain, was mobilized for 6 months in a discreet location. In his absence, Fr. John Zdinak (retired) filled in at the parish. Fr. George will return in July from his assignment.

Holy Spirit Church (Rector: Fr. Stephen Lourie)

We are experiencing gradual, steady growth in attendance, and income, and expenses. We brought 5 into The Holy Orthodox Church on Lazarus Saturday and currently have 2 new catechumens. We also have a steady growth of those joining our parish who are moving to Florida from lands in the North. We are currently awaiting commercial contractor bids for our building expansion project as we continue to upgrade what we already have. Producing new service books for Divine Liturgy on Sunday and Funeral Service, many were lost in water leakage from hurricane. Some great new Parish Council members have stepped up and filling in gaps. New leadership stepping forward in other areas as well with 2 new tonsured Readers. I have one candidate for diaconal training program in the next year or two. I am continuing to train a priest from ROCOR Western Rite who has been blessed to learn the Eastern Rite in retirement. He and his matushka have been a blessing to our parish. We were blessed to have Archimandrite Sergius bring the Wonderworking Icon of St. Anna from St. Tikhon's Monastery and lead us in a retreat on prayer. Two weeks later His Grace Gerasim paid an arch-pastoral visit on Orthodoxy Sunday and led the Orthodoxy Sunday Vespers with other local Orthodox Churches in attendance. God willing, I will travel to St. Tikhon's Monastery this Summer to acquire relics for our holy parish. Thanks be to God for all His Loving Care and Blessings.

Southeastern Deanery – 2023 Report

St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church - Norcross, GA

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Things are well at St. Mary's, thank God. We were blessed to have Arbp. Alexander with us this past January. We were especially thankful to have Father Thaddaeus Werner and Father Peter Robichau serving at St. Mary's while Fr. Christopher traveled back and forth to Minnesota after his father's repose in mid February. Thank you!

We continue to enjoy a full liturgical life at St. Mary's, but we are also taking measures to train new readers to help with responses and bear one another's burdens so that the work is no longer resting on only a few individuals during the weekday services.

Thank God, there continues to be a steady flow of inquirers and catechumens at St. Mary's, seven of whom we received back in December and January. We are currently meeting online once a week, but may be adding a second day to accommodate the newest group of catechumens forming. Our adult study group finished the book of Romans earlier this year and is now part way through Beginning to Pray by Met. Anthony Bloom of blessed memory.

We continue to do our best to support the Loaves and Fishes Ministry of St. John the Wonderworker via the coordination of Protodeacon Lazarus and a few parishioners who assist him. We also look forward to welcoming Fr. Thomas and Mat. Angela Alessandroni back to St. Mary's after Fr. Tom's retirement this July. We also thank God for the return of Fr. Gabriel Aldridge back to the Atlanta vineyard and look forward to laboring with him in Christ.

Parish council member, Taylor Hostetter, will be traveling with a group of college students from around the country to Serbia again this summer. He has also been working with Protodeacon Joseph Matusiak of the Polish Orthodox Church (formerly of the OCA) to include participants from other parts of Europe as well. Part of the trip involves Bible study with Serbian peers and also staying with local

families. The trips to Serbia have always been very successful and edifying for the participants and their hosts. It has the blessing and support of Patriarch Porfirije.

We humbly ask your holy prayers for Matushka Gretchen who was listed for liver transplant earlier this year at Piedmont Atlanta. She also hopes to be listed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN (where she was followed prior to moving to Georgia) in hopes of receiving a transplant from a living donor. During this time, Fr. Christopher's ability to travel away from the Atlanta metro area will be extremely limited. With the blessing of his Eminence, please expect his involvement in diocesan assemblies/convocations to be online-only until his wife is able to receive a new liver and has recovered accordingly. Again, by all of your holy prayers. Glory to God for all things! ~ Rev. Christopher R. Maciolek

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Macon, GA

Since our last report in July 2022, God has blessed us. Our average Sunday attendance has increased to 105-115. We currently have ten active catechumens, and we continue to have regular visitors, inquirers, and people moving to our area, making St. Innocent their home. Our choir continues to be one of our best assets. People continue to be generous, and we continue to give to international and local charities.

One highlight from this past year is the ordination to the diaconate of Columba Croft. Dn. Columba is the first deacon to serve in our parish in 13 years, and he a much-appreciated addition to our worship. Another highlight was the visit of the St. Anna icon and Archimandrite Sergius from St. Tikhon's Monastery. In the spring of 2023, we added 21 parking spaces to accommodate our growth. In addition to parking, we have added a road to our cemetery.

This summer, we will be blessed with Dn. Caleb Lewis and his family are serving their seminary internship at St. Innocent. Our iconography committee is active, and we will be working on our first phase of iconography with Vladimir Grygorenko in the spring of 2024. In connection with the iconography project, we will modify our iconostasis and add better lighting to the Altar area this year.

We are a thankful community, and as we head into our 27th year, it is our prayer that God will continue to grace us, guide us, send us spiritually hungry people, and help us to do His work in the Middle Georgia region. ~ Fr. Theophan Buck

St. Luke Orthodox Mission, Anniston, Alabama

We are exploding with dynamic growth at St. Luke in Anniston, Alabama. We Baptized and Chrismated 15 this year. We currently have 10 Catechumens. All of the Lenten, Holy Week and Pascha services hit outstanding record numbers for attendance. We had 91 attend at Pascha. Our normal Sunday Liturgy numbers are in the 60 - 70 range. Some are driving from as far as an hour and a half away. We have a lively full potluck coffee hour each Sunday and people stay well into the mid - afternoon talking, laughing and spending time with each other.

We are coming up on completing our second full year of doing daily services. At the end of matins we have a notebook filled with long lists of names of people to pray for and we read all of them out loud in prayer. I am convinced that this emphasis on daily worship and prayer has resulted in our growth. We installed a brand new sign on the front of our temple. Soon we will gather at the house of a parishioner for our annual picnic on the river. Bishop Gerasim visited with us in November and it was a tremendous event for everyone. He gave an inspiring talk and spoke personally with many of our people. We also now have a newly ordained subdeacon. It has been a wonderful year of growth and the future challenges us to even greater things in proclaiming the Gospel in our little corner of the South.

~ Fr. Basil Henry

St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church Birmingham, AL

The past year has been quite eventful at St. Symeon's. The highlight was the weekend of November 5 and 6, 2022, with the ordination of two Deacons, Dn. Phillip Ritchey on Saturday, November 5 and Dn. Rupert Cole on Sunday, November 6, by His Grace Bishop Gerasim. Dn. Phillip is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary and Dn. Rupert is a graduate of the Diaconal Vocations Program. They join Protodeacon Ephraim Rivers at the altar, along with Fr. Seraphim Joa and myself. Glory to God for a multitude of capable liturgical

support and ministry! This includes, as well, our talented choir, directed by Reader Andrew Ritchey and with Reader Stephen Ritchey as a very capable backup.

The second, and even great blessing for our community has been the Baptism and/or Chrismation of 23 adults along with 11 children and infants since last July. There are currently 3 Catechumens and several inquirers. Sunday attendance is at around 200. Pascha attendance topped 400 and Palm Sunday topped 300 (based on counting at processions).

One of our members, Georgia Briggs, author of two books, *Ikon* and *Eternal Joy*, through Ancient Faith Press (and an accomplished Iconographer, trained by our own visiting Iconographer, Dr. Alin Trifa), traveled to Romania recently for a book signing at several venues.

The October "Food and Culture Fair" as we call it, brought in over \$15,000 and stirred interest in the Faith. We look forward in August to the return of our Iconographer to continue work in the church nave. Glory to God for His great mercy and blessings!

- Fr. Alexander Fecanin

St Herman of Alaska Mission Station Tuscaloosa, AL

Grace and peace to you as I share an update on the flourishing journey of our beloved mission station in Tuscaloosa, AL, St Herman of Alaska. We give thanks to God for His abundant blessings upon us, and we rejoice in the growth and vitality we have experienced in the past year. With joyous hearts, we present to you the progress and highlights of St Herman.

Steadfast Growth:

By the grace of God, our mission continues to thrive. We are delighted to report that seven individuals have been baptized this year. Among them, a family of five and two precious infants have found their spiritual home in our mission. This growth testifies to the work of the Holy Spirit and the seeds of the Gospel taking root in our midst.

Increased Generosity:

Our community has been truly blessed with a surge in tithing and special donations. We have witnessed a substantial increase in financial contributions, including several notable and generous offerings during the spring season. This

outpouring of support enables us to strengthen our mission's ministries and extend charitable contributions to those in need.

Expanding Horizons:

As our mission continues to grow, we are faced with the joyful challenge of finding a new space to accommodate our burgeoning community. Our current location no longer meets our needs, and we have initiated the search for a more suitable place where we can gather for worship and the nurturing of spiritual growth. We trust in God's guidance as we embark on this exciting endeavor.

Vibrant Vacation Bible School:

In June, we organized a highly successful Vacation Bible School, where all the children from our mission actively participated. They joyfully learned about God's wondrous creation and returned home singing songs that celebrated the days of creation. This engaging and educational program brought together our children and deepened their understanding of our faith.

Thriving Study Groups:

Our women's and men's groups continue to flourish as they meet monthly for meaningful discussions centered around various patristic texts. These gatherings provide a nurturing environment for intellectual and spiritual growth, fostering a deepened sense of community and knowledge of our rich Orthodox heritage. Additionally, our monthly vigils provide an opportunity for prayerful connection with God and one another.

Hopeful Future:

In conclusion, we approach the future with hope and confidence. We are humbled by the growth we have experienced and eagerly anticipate what lies ahead. It is our fervent prayer that God's will be done, and we may grow into a fully established parish with a resident priest. With unwavering faith, we strive to fulfill the mission entrusted to us, seeking to glorify God in all things.

May God's grace continue to bless us, guide us, and fill our mission with the spiritually hungry souls yearning for His love. We express our deep gratitude for your support, prayers, and love, which sustain us on this journey. Together, let us proclaim the Gospel and shine the light of Orthodoxy in our little corner of the Southeastern Deanery.

In Christ,
Deacon Rupert Cole

**Carolina Deanery Annual Parish Report June 2022-June 2023
Statistical Snapshot**

Mission/Parish	Baptism/ Chrismatio n	Weddin g	Funeral	Avg. Sunday Attendance	Avg. Services Per week	% Budget Personnel	% Budget Philanthropy	% Budget Ministries	Regular Adult Education Y/N	Regular Child Education Y/N
Archangel Gabriel				35	2	40%	1%	1%	Y	Y
Holy Apostles	10	0	0	70	4				Y	Y
Holy Ascension	15	4	1	100-120	3-5	50%	2.5%	1.5%	Y	Y
Holy Cross	15	2	0	80-100	2-3	60%	3%	2%	Y	Y
Holy Transfiguration	5	2	4	120-130	3	50%	5.5%	4.7%	Y	Y
Holy Resurrection	9	0	0	57-65	3-4	40%	4%	9%	Y	Y
Nativity	7	0	0	60-80	2	62	3	10	y	y
St. Anthony	1	0	0	40-50	2	43%	2%	.4%	Y	Y
St. Basil	9	0	1	90-100	4	40%	6%	4%	Y	Y
St. George	1/0	0	0	13	2-3	47%	17%	0%	N	N/A
St. James	7/11	0	1	60-70	4	60%	1%	1%	Y	Y
St. John of the Ladder	17/3	4	2	240-260	6-7	46.3%	9%	12%	Y	Y
St. Mary	2/14	2	0	54	2-3	28%	3%	5%	Y	N
St. Nicholas	4	0	0	40-45	2	70%	2%	2%	Y	Y
St. Timothy	15	0	0	50-60	4-5	50%	3	3	Y	Y

News & Notes

Archangel Gabriel: we are actively seeking property via building committee. We have 3 catechumens. 3 men were tonsured by Archbishop Alexander in January with a first hierarchical visit.

Holy Apostles:

Holy Ascension:

Holy Cross: This year has been one of the most exciting years in the history of Holy Cross. By God's grace and the hard work and sacrifice of so many parishioners and the help of the diocese, we were able to secure our loan with a local credit union to begin our construction of our new church and hall. It has been so exciting to see the progress as we continue to pray every Friday on the property. Things are moving right on schedule and we have been given the date of the end of December for completion. We launched a final mini-campaign in June to raise another \$136,000 and we raised it in two weeks! This will allow us to finish the project as well as secure some liturgical items like the iconostas, icons and chandeliers. Morale is very high right now and there is a real sense of common vision moving forward. Also, this year we made our theme "Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess" so we emphasized our post COVID re-establishment of our many ministries and small groups that help build community with our liturgical life being primary. We have a lot of volunteers that help coordinate our sisterhood, men's group, young adult group, youth group (OCAT - Orthodox Church in America Teens), church school, adult book studies, church cleaning schedule, parish council, building committee, Open Door ministry meal preparation (local homeless shelter), choir, reader's scheduling, and altar server team. It has been such a blessing to see all of these thriving with newer members getting involved and taking leadership. We can officially say that we have recovered from the difficulties of COVID. Glory to God. We have also seen new folks moving to the area making Holy Cross their home as well as having 8 catechumens and 15 coming to our new Inquirer's class. We look forward to moving into our new church at the end of the year and, Lord willing, to host the Archbishop sometime early next year. Glory to God for all things!

Holy Transfiguration: We have thoroughly outgrown our current space and have located a 2.75 acre parcel of land for \$525,000 (a great deal considering land is going for around \$1M per acre here) only 5 minutes away from our current location. We are currently under contract and working through the due diligence period which will end July 21. Closing date is August 22. There are some details to work out to get utilities to the site, but we are getting updated information about that daily and conditions, at this point, seem favorable for us to build a church on this site to finally establish a permanent altar for our parish. Last year we were honored to have the archbishop with us for our feast day when he ordained Dr Michael Huening to the holy diaconate. We are truly grateful for this addition to our ranks of clergy as the Lord continues to bring more seekers and entrants into the catechumenate. Our church school just wrapped up another well-attended and engaging year of instruction, our Sts Mary & Martha Sisterhood is thriving, and our choir under the direction of Rdr Trey Moses continues to strengthen and excel

in raising up supplemental directors in addition to singing the services beautifully. Lastly, we are grieved to report the passing of Matushka Katrina (Theodora) Davis, wife of Fr Andrew Davis, the day after our Lord's Nativity, 2022. Memory Eternal!

Holy Resurrection: By the grace of God, Holy Resurrection keeps growing in number and in grace. We have been blessed with another parishioner attending St Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Our original seminarian completed his senior year at St Tikhon's and was ordained. Another family is pending acceptance to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and will likely depart in August of this year. The mission welcomed two babies and a total of 9 souls were received into the Holy Church. We currently have 23 catechumens and 6 inquirers attending regularly. The parish has been blessed with Fr. Matthew Fuhrman as our priest, who continues to balance the life of an active-duty Army Chaplain with family and clergy obligations. Currently assigned to Fort Moore, GA, Fr. Matthew commutes to North Augusta, SC on weekends. Holy resurrection lay people actively visit and serve at our beloved Sts Mary & Martha Orthodox Monastery in Wagener, SC. We are blessed to have Mothers Thekla and Helena in our midst, during the liturgical services. Choir ministry is one our church is greatly passionate about. Last August, Holy Resurrection hosted the Carolina Deanery Choir Workshop with Benedict and Thalia Sheehan. Last September some of the choir members traveled to and taught a choir workshop at Holy Cross Orthodox Mission in Hattiesburg, MS. Last December the mission held its Five Year Planning meeting and after diligently working for 14 months, the mission finally paid off its property mortgage! This past lent we were blessed to serve Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesdays and Fridays, which is unprecedented! Fr. Thomas Moore continues to serve our community for Lenten and Festal Services during the week. By the grace of God, over a half of an acre of land was donated to our community. Our property is now over two acres! A few short weeks ago, Vladika Alexander tonsured 4 parishioners as readers, and ordained 1 as our brand-new subdeacon. Our very own Deacon Joseph was elevated to Protodeacon and Fr. Matthew was awarded the dignity of wearing the Nabedrennik, and the right to wear the skufia and kamilavka. Our mission homeschool coop was open to the public last academic year and welcomed 37 kids to school. We hope to continue serving our local community with this much needed ministry. As we grow and welcome new members into our church family, our Men's and Women's group continues to meet on a monthly basis. Weekly catechumen classes are also offered every Sunday. We are immeasurably grateful to God for all of our many blessings.

Nativity: This June our Community of Calling grant (\$40,000) is ending. We devoted the last four years focusing on our personal and communal callings and vocations. The grant was both life-giving and life-changing for our parish community and we are very grateful for the Lily Foundation for the opportunity to be stewards of these funds. Deacon Chad Cordero was ordained on August 7, 2023 by Archbishop Alexander and Subdeacon Matthew Reuther is now completing his academic and practical portion of the DVP Program and will be ordained in late 2023 or early 2024, we are grateful for both of these two humble and faithful young men. They inspire both myself and the parish community in general. I have applied for a Reflective Leadership grant for \$15,000.00 and will be notified about the grant in July 2023. This grant will help me focus on improving and enhancing my leadership skills as well as help create a good ministry team with myself and Deacon Chad and Matt. This grant will continue this theme of calling and vocation on a more personal level. Our parish continues to grow and we recently had numerous physical plant improvements: new carpet, new roof, new mulch installed around all of our garden beds, refurbished our existing children's playground, and also power washed the entire outside of our Church building. We continue to serve the Charlotte community through our many outreach projects throughout the year: Loaves and Fishes canned food bin, clothes and toiletry items for the local Charlotte Men's Rescue Mission, backpacks and school supplies for the local schools, Angel Tree Advent Gift Program, and then during Great Lent we took up a collection for the Diocese of Alaska and sent a check for \$8,000.00. We currently have one catechumen and most likely three young men who will become catechumens in the near future. We continue to expand out outreach and in-reach ministries as we discern how we can better serve both God and neighbor.

St. Anthony: Our numbers are a bit 'off' due to the parish not having a full time priest from November 2022 - June 2023. Nevertheless we have at least six catechumens preparing for illumination, with others 'in the wings,' and will be increasing our weekly services starting in July. Even without a full-time priest we've maintained steady attendance and giving, and successfully paid off the mortgage on the land and buildings we currently occupy.

St. Basil: Continued growth: many new catechumens and inquirers, attendance has consistently been over 100 in the last few months. We have added and sustained a Thursday liturgy, which continues to draw 15-20+ (and a regular "coffee hour" potluck following!). Choir members have continued to step up, and some are rising into leadership roles. We had our most robust Lenten schedule ever, and nearly everything was well attended. Men's and women's groups are flourishing with lay leadership. We have been aggressively paying down our diocesan debt, and we approved a budget with an \$800/mo donation to the Diocese of Alaska, an increase to our deanery contributions, and our 1% seminaries contribution. Treasurers have made great strides in accounting, budgeting, and reporting. We have enjoyed two Bishop visits in the last seven months. I have two young men interested in seminary and at least one potential diaconal candidate, plus a few other potential readers.

St. George: Our adult education with a sort of Bible study on Ezekiel 1, continued for only five sessions, so at the moment we are not doing adult education, though we will resume, presumably in the fall. || Child Education—no change: Nothing formal yet, since at this time we have only one child of school age. Two families are doing home instruction. || Although our anticipated work on the exterior of the church and hall (replacing damaged clapboards, painting) did not happen before the end of 2022, as we had hoped, we have finally found a source for wood (we think!) and we anticipate beginning work on the exterior in the not-too-distant future.|| In August 2014 there were two members; the number has fluctuated over the years, but we now take care of fifteen to nineteen people, including children, and a varying number of visitors (particularly in the summer months). There are two adults who have been in catechumen status for years and still are, and although they do not come regularly, they consider the mission their church. There are also several Orthodox believers in the general area (including the Outer Banks, a drive of at least an hour and twenty minutes) who are not formally members of the mission, but consider St George's their parish. Since January 2023 we have seven inquirers, whom we hope to enroll as catechumens within the next month. || Still noteworthy is the fact that the mission receives financial support from a number of friends in the area who are not Orthodox but who like the idea of having an Orthodox presence in the community; in addition, there are several Orthodox and non-Orthodox people who live in various parts of the country, who contribute to the mission. And one member who has moved away continues to be generous to the mission. An adult who was baptized a year ago now serves in the altar (a huge help!), and both he and another member are beginning to chant the readings at Vespers and the Apostle at weekday Liturgies.

St James: Since Summer 2022 our parish has jumped in attendance and in the number of inquirers. This was a big change over the past several years and seems to reflect what other parishes noticed during the COVID period. These inquirers have been an engaging group who have turned out to be largely free from some of the craziness that other parishes have reported. We received a large group of converts at Pascha, and have another group in the process of becoming catechumens. Because of this, we rapidly outgrew the little building we had rented since 2012. Miraculously, a church building for sale came to our attention in January 2023, and we moved quickly to purchase it. We served our first service in the new building on the Feast of the Annunciation. At Pascha this year we had over 100 in attendance, which was a big leap for us. Giving has been excellent and we have worked hard over the last year to increase adult christian education classes. Outreach (in terms of ministries outside of our parish) are still relatively non-existent. Even so, the Lord continues to bless us with new visitors and those who are curious about Orthodoxy.

St. John of the Ladder: We continue with strong growth on all fronts. The interior finish work in the temple is nearly complete (we are lacking only some of the shellacking of the T&G ceilings and the two side vestries/sacristies. Our icon program continues with the completion of the pendentives since our last assembly and work underway in the Apse (the Apsidal Arch was just completed at the end of June 2023). The parish hall is nearing completion with the “wrap around” porch on the temple to break ground in the coming weeks. June 1, 2023 saw the transfer of Fr Joseph Wesseler to St Anthony the Great Mission in Rock Hill, SC, and the assignment of Fr. Alexander Earl (SVOTS 2023) as “Assistant Priest” at SJOTL. Fr. Alexander will focus on our Education Programs. We also hired a full time choir director who began in May 2023.

St. Mary Magdalene: Fr. Michael was appointed Priest-in-Charge by Archbishop Alexander early in 2022. We began with 15 people some of which were not Sacramental members. The Archbishop gave us his blessing to elect new members to our Parish Council from our newer members. We concentrated on 5 areas of development: 1) Liturgical worship, 2) Evangelism, 3) Christian education, 4) Charities Ministry, and 5) Administration. By God’s grace and love, we currently have 71 Adults who regularly attend our parish, 12 of which are Catechumens. There are 24 Youth under the age of 18. There are also 12 Inquirer’s (seekers), which include 9 youth. Attendance has increased from below 10 to an average of 54 with a high of 80 on Pascha. In our last’s report we noted that our problems at STMM were not financial but spiritual. Many new families have joined our community this year, and have brought with them a “good spirit” and a common vision for the future. Our Sisterhood and Brotherhood are working together for the building up of our Holy Church. We established St. Brigids ’Ministry for outreach for the needy. Our Evangelism Ministry meets e/o Thursday on line for Catechetical instruction. Participants in this ministry join the church as Catechumens. We are grateful to report that we are once again offering our Tithes to the Diocese and Deanery, and we are paying off our Mortgage which is held by the Diocese. We are on target to meet and even exceed our proposed fiscal budget. New Readers & Altar Services are now taking part in our Liturgical Services; and a new Choir Director and new members are taking part in our Music ministry. We are praying that “when God so wills,” He will send us a permanent Priest to Shepherd this flock. We ask that you keep us in your prayers. You are always in our prayers! +Fr. Michael

St. Nicholas: We have lost 4 adults and 8 children due to military relocation. In July 2023, we will lose another 2 adults and 3 children for the same reason. We have 13 catechumens at this time. We are working on having landscaping work done at the Church as well as putting up a partial privacy fence to enhance the outside of the Church. It has been a good year for us, and we are grateful to God. I just completed my 10th year as priest-in-charge.